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Chitralipi

# CHITRALIPI

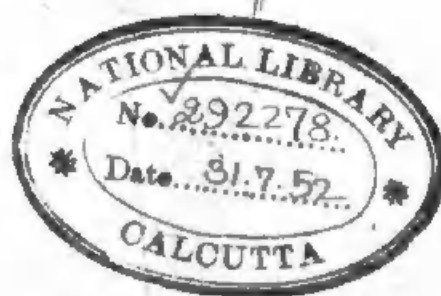
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Rabindranath  
Tagore



VISVA-BHARATI

1951



When, at the age of five, I was compelled to learn and to repeat the lessons from my text-book, I had the notion that literature had its mysterious manifestations on the printed pages, that it represented some supernatural tyranny of an immaculate perfection. Such a despairing feeling of awe was dissipated from my mind when by chance I discovered in my own person that verse-making was not beyond the range of an untrained mind and tottering handwriting. Since then my sole medium of expression has been words, followed at sixteen by music, which also came to me as a surprise.

## My Pictures

In the meanwhile the modern art movement, following the line of the oriental tradition, was started by my nephew Abanindranath. I watched his activities with an envious mood of self-diffidence, being thoroughly convinced that my fate had refused me passport across the strict boundaries of letters.

But one thing which is common to all arts is the principle of rhythm which transforms inert materials into living creations. My instinct for it and my training in its use led me to know that lines and colours in art are no carriers of information; they seek their rhythmic incarnation in pictures. Their ultimate purpose is not to illustrate or to copy some outer fact or inner vision, but to evolve a harmonious wholeness which finds its passage through our eyesight into imagination. It neither questions our mind for meaning nor burdens it with unmeaningness, for it is, above all, meaning.

Desultory lines obstruct the freedom of our vision with the inertia of their irrelevance. They do not move with the great march of all things. They have no justification to exist and, therefore, they rouse up against them their surroundings; they perpetually disturb peace. For this reason the scattered scratches and corrections in my manuscripts cause me annoyance. They represent regrettable mischance, like a gapingly foolish crowd stuck in a wrong place, undecided as to how or where to move on. But if the spirit of a dance is inspired in the heart of that crowd, the unrelated many would find a perfect unity and be relieved of its hesitation between to be and not to be. I try to make my corrections dance, connect them in a rhythmic relationship and transform accumulation into adornment.

This has been my unconscious training in drawing. I find disinterested pleasure in this work of reclamation, often giving to it more time and care than to my immediate duty in literature that has the sole claim upon my attention, often aspiring to a permanent recognition from the world. It interests me deeply to watch how lines find their life and character, as their connection with each other develops in varied cadences, and how they begin to speak in gesticulations. I can imagine the universe to be a universe of lines which in their movements and combinations pass on their signals of existence along the interminable chain of moments. The rocks and clouds, the trees, the waterfalls, the dance of the fiery orbs, the endless procession of life send up across silent eternity and limitless space

a symphony of gestures with which mingles the dumb wail of lines that are widowed gypsies roaming about for a chance union of fulfilment.

In the manuscript of creation there occur erring lines and erasures, solitary incongruities, standing against the world principle of beauty and balance, carrying perpetual condemnation. They offer problems and, therefore, material to the *Visvakarma*, the Great Artist, for they are the sinners whose obstreperous individualism has to be modulated into a new variation of universal concord.

And this was my experience with the casualties in my manuscripts, when the vagaries of the ostracized mistakes had their conversion into a rhythmic inter-relationship, giving birth to unique forms and characters. Some assumed the temperate exaggeration of a probable animal that had unaccountably missed its chance of existence, some a bird that only can soar in our dreams and find its nest in some hospitable lines that we may offer it in our canvas. Some lines showed anger, some placid benevolence, through some lines ran an essential laughter that refused to apply for its credentials to the shape of a mouth which is a mere accident. These lines often expressed passions that were abstract, evolved characters that hung upon subtle suggestions. Though I did not know whether such unclassified apparitions of non-deliberate origin could claim their place in decent art, they gave me intense satisfaction and very often made me neglect my important works. In connection with this came to my mind the analogy of music's declaration of independence. There can be no question that originally melody accompanied words, giving interpretation to the sentiments contained in them. But music threw off this bond of subservience and represented moods abstracted from words, and characters that were indefinite. In fact, this liberated music does not acknowledge that feelings which can be expressed in words are essential for its purpose, though they may have their secondary place in musical structure. This right of independence has given music its greatness, and I suspect that evolution of pictorial and plastic art develops on this line, aiming to be freed from an absolute alliance with natural facts or incidents.

However, I need not formulate any doctrine of art but be contented by simply saying that in my case my pictures did not have their origin in trained discipline, in tradition and deliberate attempt at illustration, but in my instinct for rhythm, my pleasure in harmonious combination of lines and colours.

July 2, 1930.

Rabindranath Tagore

## Plates

1	7.75 × 6.25	inches
2	11 × 8.5	
3	9.25 × 11.25	
4	11.25 × 8.5	
5	11.25 × 8.5	
6	10 × 8	
7	9.5 × 6.25	
8	9 × 7	
9	10 × 7	
10	10.5 × 8.5	
11	9 × 7	
12	21 × 18.5	
13	11 × 8.5	
14	13 × 7.75	
15	16.5 × 30.75	

Painted in various inks and tempera colours

10 is on leather, the rest are on paper

Plate 1 reproduces a manuscript poem

Collection : Rabindra-Bhavan

Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan

Handwritten mark in the top left corner.

Handwritten mark in the top right corner.

Main body of the document containing multiple lines of handwritten text, many of which are obscured by large black redaction marks.

Handwritten mark in the bottom right corner.















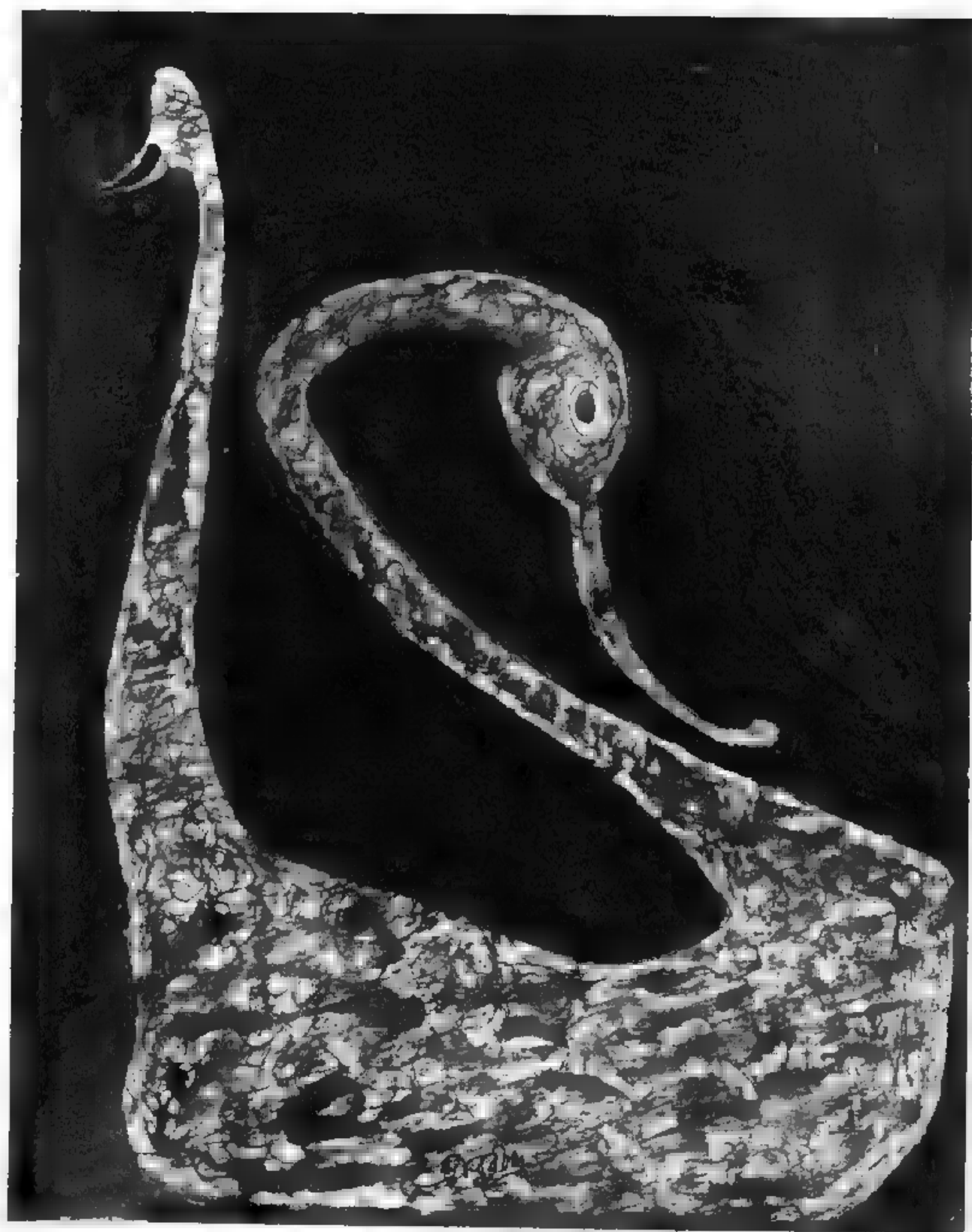


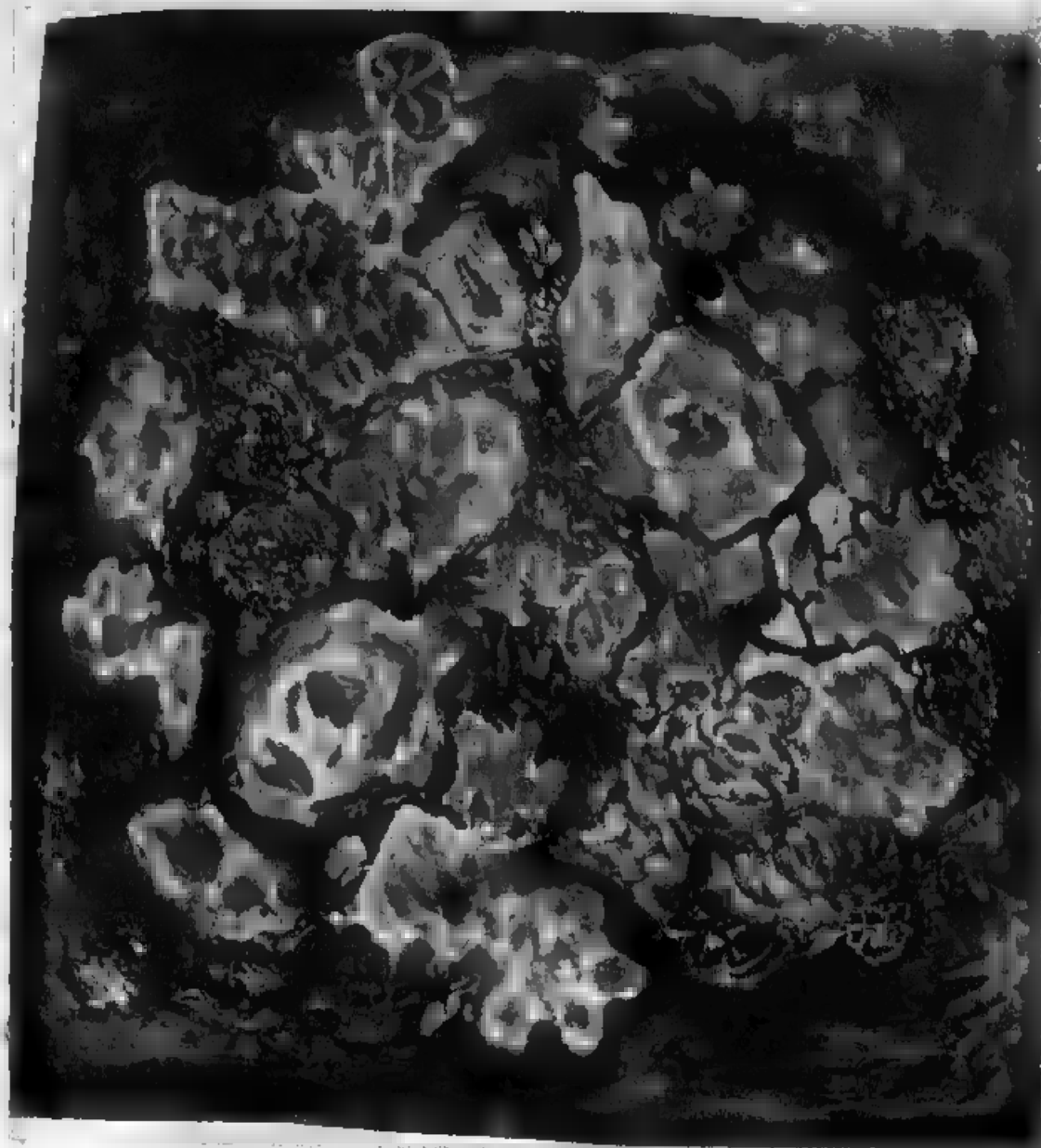
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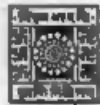








23 December 1951



Published by Pulinbihari Sen  
Visva-Bharati Publishing Department  
6/3 Dwarkanath Tagore Lane Calcutta 7

Designed by Prithwish Neogy

Plates 1-6, 8, 9, 11, 13-15 engraved and printed by  
Bengal Autotype Company Calcutta 6

Plate 12 engraved and printed by  
Bharat Phototype Studio Calcutta 12

Plates 7 and 10 engraved by Bengal Autotype Company  
and printed by Bharat Phototype Studio

Text printed by Norman A Ellis  
Baptist Mission Press Calcutta 16